Three DA Candidates Debate

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Jewish Women's Council Presents Program

Three of the four candidates for Orleans Parish district attorney debated their programs and records Friday in a campaign confrontation before the Greater New Orleans Section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

Appearing at the event in the Jewish Community Center were Harry Connick, Ross Scaccia and Charles R. Ward. Only candidate not to appear was the incumbent Jim Garrison, who was represented at the get-together by Assistant DA William Alford.

Alex Gifford, WVUE television news director, acted as moderator for the debate. Candidates were allowed to briefly sketch their campaign platforms, answer questions from the all-female audience, and retort to accusations from their campaign opponents.

Ward, first to speak, said the crucial issue in the district attorney's race is whether the people want a change in criminal action procedure in this parish.

DISCUSSES ANGOLA

The police burglary scandal, revelations of sexual assaults in the Parish Prison, and the Clay L. Shaw presidential conspiracy case emphasize the need for a change, according to Ward. The former first assistant district attorney maintained that the parish can expect no change unless Garrison is ousted from office.

Calling the state penitentiary in Angola "a big farm where prisoners chop cotton," Ward asserted that a key element in his platform is the need of rehabilitating criminals. He said the Angola method is not the way.

Connick declared that the parish needs "someone who is responsible" at the district attorney's office at Tulane and Broad. He vowed that he could provide the leadership needed in prosecutions and rehabilitation of criminals.

He expressed gratification at the results of a poll of members of the New Orleans Bar Association, in which Connick garnered the lion's share of the lawyers' votes for the district attorney's office. Of the 621 ballots counted, Connick received 450 votes, Garrison received 83, Ward 68 and Scaccia 11.

Connick said the poll reflects the views of the New Orleans voter.

CALLS FOR CHANGE

Scaccia called for a change in the DA's office, maintaining he is a "balanced" candidate and the best qualified. As a prosecutor in the DA's office under Garrison, Scaccia said he had tried a total of 75 jury cases.

He cited this as a key criterion in electing an experienced man to the DA's post.

In response to a question from the audience concerning U.S. Supreme Court decisions on the rights of the criminally accused, Scaccia said a DA should work within the law when prosecuting. He said the police may be frustrated by the court's decisions, but expressed the view that these decisions do not hamper prosecutors.

Connick said authorities should not complain about such court decisions, but instead should "live with them because

they are designed to protect individual rights." He said criminals can be prosecuted within the framework of the law.

HELD UNWORKABLE

Ward declared that some of the court's decisions are wrong, and called some of them "asinine." Such decisions, he said, are demoralizing to the police and must be changed. He claimed that several of the decisions by the Supreme Court are "completely unworkable."

Since Garrison was not present, his representative, Alford, was not allowed to speak unless it was to answer attacks on Garrison by the other three candidates. That opportunity came when Connick said he had obtained invoices showing that Garrison's office had purchased $8,000 worth of wiretapping equipment several years ago. Since that time, the equipment has been used only once, according to Connick, who then accused Garrison of wasting the taxpayers' money.

Alford replied that Garrison was "unalterably" opposed to wiretapping, but he did not explain the $8,000 purchase mentioned by Connick.

Asked if they planned to hire Negro assistant district attorneys if elected, Ward noted that the DA's office was integrated at a lower level under his supervision, indicating that he would continue to pursue an integrated policy; Connick replied simply that he would hire Negroes; and Scaccia stated that he would be "impartial" and not consider race or religion in making appointments.